



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 19, 2003

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NUTRITION PROGRAM CONSPIRACY UNCOVERED

PHOENIX, ARIZONA -- The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona announced that on March 18, 2003, a federal grand jury at Phoenix, Arizona, returned a six count indictment against, Genevieve Marie Castaneda (D.O.B., 10/17/49); Jose Antonio Colin-Tarango, (D.O.B., 9/15/71) and Norma Patricia Vilchis de Colin, (D.O.B., 3/1/78), all residents of Phoenix, Arizona.

The indictment alleges that the three individuals conspired from at least March 2002 to February 2003 to fraudulently obtain Enfamil baby formula from the Women, Infants and Children Nutrition Program (WIC), administered by the United States Department of Agriculture through the Maricopa County

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Department of Public Health. The indictment states that Castaneda, while employed as a certified nutrition worker by the Maricopa County Department of Public Health prepared fraudulent applications and WIC checks for numerous fictitious persons and then she and Norma Patricia Vilchis de Colin would assume the identity of those fictitious persons to obtain the Enfamil product from local grocery stores. The Enfamil was then re-sold by Jose Antonio Colin-Tarango. Counts 2 to 6 of the indictment list five acquisitions of Enfamil by the defendants at area grocery stores using the fraudulent WIC checks during October and November 2002.

The federal indictment charges all three defendants with violating Title 18 of the United States Code, Section 371, Conspiracy; and five counts of Title 42 of the United States Code, Section 1760(g), Obtaining WIC Program Benefits by Fraud.

A conviction for each count of the indictment carries a maximum penalty of five year(s) imprisonment, a \$250,000.00 fine or both. The case is set for arraignment before a United States Magistrate on Wednesday, April 2, 2003 at the U.S. District Courthouse, 401 W. Jefferson St., Phoenix, Arizona.

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An indictment is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The investigation preceding the indictment was conducted by Special Agents of the Office of Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; the Arizona Department of Public Safety, and supervisory personnel from the Maricopa County Department of Public Health.

“It was through the vigilant supervisory personnel of WIC that this problem was initially identified and brought to my attention,” stated Dr. Jonathan Weisbuch, Director, Maricopa County Department of Health. “We referred this problem to Arizona State officials who referred it to the USDA Office of the Inspector General.” “We do not tolerate this behavior in employees. Public Health works to promote, preserve, and protect the health of people and communities in Maricopa County. These actions violate the very core of our mission and our values of Public Health which include “honesty and integrity,” continued Dr. Weisbuch.

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The prosecution is being handled by Richard I. Mesh, Assistant United States Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona.

CASE NUMBER: CR-03-0266-PHX

RELEASE NUMBER: 2003-036

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